

Mapline

A Brief Guide to the CARTOGRAPHIC RESOURCES OF FLORENCE

BY DAVID WOODWARD

Special Number 1 March 1978



Palazzo Vecchio. Sala della Carte Geografiche (Guardaroba). Map of the British Isles by Danti and Buonsignori (1576). Photo: Alinari.

Introduction

Letters from Italy (Mapline 8) was intended to convey the lack of bibliographic access to maps in Florentine libraries. It was pointed out, that except for some of the well-known cartographic gems, maps are considered of low priority, and no institution, with the exception of the Istituto Geografico, employs a map librarian. The ideal solution is a union catalogue of the geographical/cartographic collections not only in Florence and its region (Tuscany), but in all of Italy's 20 regions. Plans for such a massive task have been proposed many times, particularly at the triennial Italian geographical congresses towards the end of the nineteenth century (for example,

the scheme proposed by Giovanni Marinelli in 1894). New hope was kindled under the leadership of Roberto Almagià and Giuseppe Caraci, but, with their passing, no one has taken up the challenge. What follows is a sketch of the main libraries in Florence where maps, atlases and geographical books can be found.

General Notes about the Libraries

The opening hours given here do not apply to festival days and may vary according to the season, usually by curtailment of hours in the afternoon.

Reference is found occasionally to the Biblioteca Bardi and the Biblioteca del Istituto degli Studi Superiori, both of which were partly subsumed by the Biblioteca della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Università degli Studi, Piazza Brunelleschi, Firenze. The latter library contains a few atlases in bad repair, but has now closed for lack of staff.

The letter of introduction, or lettera di presentazione, is often required by Italian research libraries. It is either provided by the reader's own institution of higher learning, or by the local consulate.



A. Map Libraries

Istituto Geografico Militare. Cartoteca.
via Cesare Battisti, 12 Tel. 19 89 81
50122 Firenze
Director: Gen. D. Celestino Revelli

Hours: 10:30-12:30 M-F

Access: Special pass required at gate, given in exchange for passport and letter of introduction.

About 100,000 maps, 1,000 atlases, and good globe collection, from 1600 to the present day. Among the wall maps displayed are: Blaeu, *Italy*, 1659; Blaeu, *Africa, America, and Europe* (all 1669); Greuter, *Italy*, 1676. Not displayed is Magini's six-sheet map of Italy, 1608, apparently unique. Published catalogue: Istituto Geografico Militare (1934). See also Almagià (1929).

Patricia Moore, Editor

A newsletter published by The Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography
at The Newberry Library · 60 West Walton Street · Chicago, Illinois · 60610 \$1.50 ©1978 The Newberry Library

B. General Libraries

1. *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale*
Piazza dei Cavalleggeri, 1 Tel. 29 84 37
50122 Firenze
Director: Prof. Diego Maltese
Curator of Prints: Dottoressa Fabia Borroni
Salvatori.

Hours: 9-7, M-F; 9-1, Sat.

Access: Catalogue open. Sala di Consultazione (special reading room on second floor): apply for reader's card with letter of introduction.

Manuscript maps in all the major collections (Magliabechiana, Palatina, Guicciardini, Tordi) but no bibliographical access. Best guide to catalogues of manuscript collections is Kristeller (1960). Manuscript list of nautical charts in the Landau-Finally collection. Printed maps and atlases catalogued on cards in about 20 drawers at the end of the Author card catalogue on the first floor. Among the gems: Francesco Rosselli, [*Planisfero ovale*], 1502-1506; Manuscript of Ptolemy *Cosmographia*, 15th century, with 39 maps (Magliabechiana collection); Uzielli and Amat di S. Filippo (1884) lists 30 manuscripts of geographical interest (e.g. portolans, portolan charts, nautical atlases, etc.)

Most of the map collection and the folio atlases, being stored in the basement, were badly damaged in the flood of 4 November 1966. Some of the quarto atlases have been restored (call numbers of the restored items are found in a separate card catalogue), but the collation of these atlases has often been disturbed in the process.

The Geography section of the open-shelf reference works at the far end of the Sala di Consultazione has the best selection of reference works on the history of cartography of any Florentine library.

Requested books often take three hours to arrive; it is better to call for them the day before, if possible. Books that have been damaged and restored take a full day's notice.



2. *Biblioteca Marucelliana di Firenze*
via Cavour, 43 Tel: 21 06 02
50129 Firenze
Director: Dottoressa Anna Lenzuni

Hours: 9-1, 3-7, M-F; 9-1 Sat.

Access: Open. For consulting rare books, identification is required.

Good general collection of atlases from the 16th to 19th centuries, including a fine Venetian miscellaneous atlas of ca. 1568 (catalogued under Lafreri), the unique catalogue of Lafreri's print shop (ca. 1572), and a little-studied three volume collection of miscellaneous printed and manuscript maps (call number 8.C.I.2). For a brief description of the latter see Borroni (1970). Consult the manuscript handlist of maps and atlases in addition to the public catalogue. At least 8 portolani, a manuscript nautical atlas of the 15th century with four maps, and a portolan chart (framed in a small office off the Sala di Consultazione) are to be found here.

Topographical prints and maps of Florence are found in the extensive print collection, for which there is a separate catalogue in the Sala di Consultazione. Manuscripts include some letters of the Venetian publisher Antonia Zatta, but I have not examined them for

reference to his *Atlante*. Good collection of Italian cartobibliographical works, reprints, and exhibition catalogues. The open-shelf reference collection for general bibliography is excellent.

Since this library is around the corner from the University, and since the students do not have a decent library of their own, the reading rooms are heavily used by students, but the early reader gets a seat.

3. *Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana*
Piazza San Lorenzo, 9 Tel. 21 44 43
50123 Firenze
Director: Dottoressa Antonietta Morandini

Hours: 8-2, M-F

Access: letter of introduction.



Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana. La Sala rotonda, with three armillary spheres. Photo: Alinari.

Built around the core of the library of Cosimo il Vecchio, the Laurenziana grew with the collections of the powerful Medici family, and was finally opened to the public in 1571. It contains some cartographic gems, including the Medici atlas of 1351, the Salviati planisphere of 1526/27, portolan charts of 1423, 1427 (Vesconte), 1568, 1632, etc. Two manuscripts of Ptolemy's *Cosmographia* with maps: one of the 14th century with 65 maps, one of the fifteenth century with 30 maps. Includes an uncatalogued collection of about 85 maps, views, and drawings of Dutch possessions known as the *Carte di Castello*, and Napoleon's geography notes written when he was a student, etc. See Rostagno (1923).

4. *Biblioteca Riccardiana-Moreniana*
 via de' Ginoir, 10 Tel: 21 25 86
 50129 Firenze
 Director: Dottoressa Maria Jole Minicucci

Hours: 8-2, M-F
 Access: Letter of introduction.



Biblioteca Riccardiana. Reading Room. Photo: Alinari.

Good collection of manuscript portolani and portolan charts (Uzielli and Amat di S. Filippo have 11 entries), including a nautical atlas of 16 maps by Francesco Ghisolfo and an anonymous manuscript atlas of nautical charts. Representative collection of editions of Ptolemy's *Cosmographia* and general atlases of the 16th to 18th centuries, including a fine copy of Dudley's *Arcano del Mare*. See the catalogue by Rostagno (1923) and the Firenze, *Mostra Vespucciana Catalogo* (1955).

5. *Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza*
 Piazza dei Giudici, 1 Tel. 29 34 93
 50112 Firenze
 Director: Professoressa Maria Luisa Righini Bonelli
 Librarian: Dottoressa Maria Celeste Cantù

Hours: 9-12:30, M-F
 Access: Apply to Dottoressa Cantù.

Excellent collection of early scientific instruments, including those of cartographic interest, such as globes, astrolabes, theodolites, armillary spheres, etc. Among the globes are terrestrial and celestial globes of Greuter (1632, 1636, 1695) and Blaeu. Nautical charts on vellum, including Lopo Homem (1554). The Mediceo-Lorenese library contains a fine collection of scientific treatises, including works on geography, cartography, and surveying. See Di Pietro and Bonelli (1970). (There is also a subject catalogue in manuscript). For the scientific instruments, see

the classic work of Boffito (1929), and, more recently, Settle and Bonelli, (1978). The open shelf reference collection contains the standard works on the history of science and technology, which the historian of cartography is well advised to check.

The staff is well known to scholars from all over the world for their helpfulness and expertise.

C. Archives

1. *Archivio di Stato*
 Loggiato degli Uffizi (east side) Tel. 21 16 29
 Piazzale degli Uffizi
 50122 Firenze
 Director: Dottore Giuseppe Panzini

Hours: 8:30-1, M-F

Official manuscripts relating to Florence and Tuscany and major collections of private family papers. Large collection of manuscript plans and maps relating to public works (e.g. city planning, sanitation, flood control) which, as of the date of writing, were not available for study. Among the excellent manuscript nautical charts are those by Petrus Vesconte, Giovanni da Carignano, Grazioso Benincasa, and an anonymous atlas of 24 maps possibly by Lopo Homem. (Uzielli and Amat di S. Filippo (1884) list 15 items). A unique woodcut map of Tuscany (1536) by Girolamo Bell'Armato, and a manuscript inventory of Francesco Rosselli's workshop (1527) are included. See Firenze, *Elenco* (1878) and Caraci (1922). Ten large volumes of plans of various dates from the 16th to 18th centuries relative to Tuscany have in large part been unexplored.

On completion of its new building near Piazza Beccaria, the Archives will move from their present extremely cramped quarters in the Uffizi.

2. *Biblioteca e Archivio Storico del Comune*
 via dell'Oriuolo, 22 Tel. 21 64 41
 50122 Firenze
 (If entrance at above address is closed, try via S. Egidio, 21).

Hours: 9-7, M-F; 9-1, Sat.
 Hours for the Archives: 9:30-11:30, T, Th
 Access: open.

In the Archives are deposited plans, maps, and views of Florence not displayed in the adjoining *Museo Storico Topografico "Firenze com'era"* which is also worth a short visit (Hours: 9-4, M, T, W, F). See Mori and Boffito (1926).

D. Libraries & Print Collections for Art History

1. *Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz*
 via Giusti, 44 Tel. 57 39 36
 50121 Firenze

Hours: 9-7, M-F
 Access: Reader's card with letter of introduction.

For topics in the history of cartography that touch on the graphic arts, this library is excellent. Fine collection of art-history periodicals, monographs, reference works, and a renowned library of photographs relating to Italian drawing and painting, all on open shelf.

2. *Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi*
Piazzale degli Uffizi Tel. not available
50122 Firenze
Director: Dottoressa Anna Forlani Tempesti

Hours: 8:30-1, M-F
Access: Reader's card with letter of introduction.

Fine print collection with maps interspersed, catalogued and arranged for art historians, who demand both subject and engraver approaches. Among the topographical subjects, maps are found. The reader may also ask to see all the prints of a given engraver.

3. *Biblioteca Berenson*
Villa I Tatti, Tel. 60 32 51
via Vincigliata, 26
50135 Firenze
Director: Professor Craig Hugh Smyth

Hours: 9-12:30, M-F
Access: Reader's card with letter of introduction.

An excellent open-shelf reference library containing among its art-history collections, good selections of books in the history of printing, calligraphy, bibliography, and other subjects germane to the history of cartography. The basic general histories of cartography in English are present (Bagrow, Humphreys, Tooley etc.), a welcome sight for those who cannot bring their personal libraries with them. Take a Number 10 bus from the Station to Ponte a Mensola (about 30 minutes from the center of Florence).

E. Painted Mural Maps & Views in Florence

There are several examples of the genre of mural cartography in Florence that the map-oriented visitor to the city should not miss.



Palazzo Vecchio. Sala della Carte Geografiche (Guardaroba). General view of globe and painted maps by Danti and Buonsignori (1576). The detail on the globe is now almost indecipherable. Photo: Alinari.

1. *Palazzo Vecchio*, Piazza della Signoria. Hours 9-4, Sun-Fri., closed Saturday. The most famous maps are those in the Guardaroba, or Sala delle Mappe Geografiche, an elegant room surrounded by wardrobes carved by Dionigi Nigetti, and painted with 53 maps (world-wide) begun by Fra Ignazio Danti (1563) and finished by Don Stefano Buonsignori (1576).

In the middle of the room is a large terrestrial globe on which little detail can be perceived. Elsewhere in the Palazzo Vecchio is the fine fresco view of Florence by Giorgio Vasari (1529-1530), and on entering the building (around the first courtyard) are a number of views of Austrian towns painted in 1565 to give Johanna of Austria a cheerful welcome when she arrived in Florence as the bride of Francesco di Cosimo de' Medici.

2. *Gallerie degli Uffizi*. Hours: 10-4, T-Sat, 10-12 Sun. In Room 16, the Sala delle Mappe, we find the maps of Tuscany by Don Stefano Buonsignori (1589). The famous Leonardo da Vinci Annunciation, with its idealized Tuscan landscape in the background, used to be in this room, but it is now found in the west gallery.

3. *Museo Storico Topografico Firenze Come'Era*. Hours: 9-4 M, T, W, F. There is a series of fine lunettes depicting topographical views of famous rural properties around Florence.

Bibliography

- Almagià, Roberto. Monumenta Italiae Cartographica. Firenze, Istituto Geografico Militare, 1929.
- Boffito, Giuseppe. Gli strumenti della scienza e la scienza degli strumenti. Firenze, Libreria Internazionale Seeber, 1929.
- Borroni Salvatori, Fabia. "La collezione stampe della Biblioteca Marucelliana di Firenze," *Accademie e Biblioteche d'Italia* 38 (1970): 108.
- Caraci, Giuseppe. "Catalogo della Mostra di Carte, di Manoscritti e di Stampe d'interesse geografico fatta presso il R. Archivio di Stato di Firenze," *Atti dello VIII Congresso Geografico Italiano* 3 (1922): 94-139.
- Di Pietro, Giuseppe, and Maria Luisa Righini Bonelli. Catalogo della Biblioteca Mediceo-Lorenese. Firenze, Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 1970.
- Firenze, Comitato onoranze ad Amerigo Vespucci. Mostra Vespucciana. Catalogo. Firenze, 1955.
- Firenze. Soprintendenza degli Archivi Toscani. Elenco dei documenti orientali e delle carte nautiche e geografiche che si conservano negli Archivi di Stato di Firenze e di Pisa. Firenze, 1878.
- Istituto Geografico Militare. Catalogo Ragionato nella cartoteca dell'Istituto Geografico Militare. Firenze, Istituto Geografico Militare, 1934. 3 vols.: Vol. 1, *Foreign countries*.--Vol. 2, *Italy*.--Vol. 3, *Globes, world maps, and miscellaneous*.
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar. Latin Manuscript Books before 1600. New York, Fordham University Press, 1960.
- Marinelli, Giuseppe. Saggio di Cartografia Italiana. Firenze, Ricci, 1894.
- Mori, Attilio, and Giuseppe Boffito. Firenze nelle Vedute e Piante. Roma, Multigrafica Editrice, 1960 (reprint).
- Rostagno, Enrico. Mostra storica di Geografia inaugurata nella Laurenziana il 29 marzo 1921. Firenze, Giuseppe Cencetti, 1923.
- Settle, Thomas B. and Maria Luisa Righini Bonelli. Antique Instruments at the Museum of the History of Science, Florence. Firenze, Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza, 1978.
- Uzielli, Gustavo, and Pietro Amat di S. Filippo. Mappamondi, Carte Nautiche, Portolani, ed altri monumenti, cartografici. Roma, Società Geografica Italiana, 1882-1884 (*Studi biografici e bibliografici sulla storia della Geografia in Italia*, vol. 2) Usually catalogued under Amat di S. Filippo.